

That it is not well to pose as a prophet, particularly in one's own country, is an observation as old as recorded history. It is not surprising, therefore, that we do **PLAGUE** not see the scientific departments **PANDEMIC.** of our government uttering prophecies, save as they may be deduced by him who reads from the dry-as-dust compilations of mere facts or figures occasionally issued. From the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service comes a pamphlet of figures and bald statements of fact pregnant with the soul of prophesy.*

In 1894 plague escaped from the endemic Indo-Chinese focus in the province of Yunnan, China, and infected Canton and Hongkong. Six years later, in 1900, it had invaded 76 different places in 26 countries, and in 40 of these it was noted as epidemic. By the end of the next 7 years it had invaded 146 places in 48 countries and in 76 of these it was noted as epidemic. Since January of the present year it has appeared in a number of other places, and in our own country, Los Angeles is to be added to the list of points where the pest has appeared. In 14 years it has spread to every continent on the globe and is there fixed in spite of, in many cases, every effort that modern science and unlimited money could combinedly put forth to uproot it. These facts are intensely significant and that the disease will still further increase and spread, is a prophesy almost elemental. As yet we do not know of the existence of plague in our Eastern or Southern seaboard, yet a careful examination of the rat population has not been made and one may well be justified in looking forward to such an examination with a certain amount of dread of the story that might be revealed. Quarantine measures along this entire seaboard have been directed practically exclusively to the maintenance of careful watchfulness for human plague, and the rodent, the real menace, seems not to have been under surveillance. With a vermin-free individual infected with plague, there is practically no danger of transmission of the disease, for the pneumonic form is so scarce as to be negligible. Only in a vermin-ridden population is the human agency in transmission one to be considered. If we have learned nothing else from the recent work of the Indian Plague Commission, and the still more recent work in San Francisco, we have learned the true nature of the disease and its transmission and that all quarantine measures should be formulated and carried out with the single idea of rat quarantine and vermin destruction. It is high time, in view of the exceedingly rapid distribution of the plague over the world, and of the facts which have been demonstrated in the last few years' work, that our federal government

extended its energies to a rat examination of the East and South, and that every seaport in that territory prosecute an active and reliable rat quarantine. No seaport in the world is without danger, for into any seaport a ship may come, and all ships carry rats some of which may have had the disease, in its quiescent, chronic form, for long periods of time. No other known disease offers so many curious variations in its epidemiology or is so terribly destructive of human life at one time and so insignificant in its ravages at others, without seeming rhyme or reason. There may be a quiescent period of years followed suddenly and inexplicably by a terrific epidemic. Fortunately, in spite of all that we do not know about the disease, the little that we do know serves to point out the road to protection. The handwriting is on the wall; shall we read it or complacently ignore it?

What is to be the attitude of the medical profession, now fast learning the various ways in which it has been exploited and buncoed by **WHAT IS** the commercial manufacturer, **IT TO BE?** toward the supposedly reputable pharmaceutical manufacturing house that voluntarily and intentionally goes into the patent medicine business? Shall we say that it is no concern of ours? Shall we quietly allow such a house to "play both ends against the middle?" Shall we aid the wanderer from the paths of plain and simple pharmaceutical manufacturing? That such questions are even now presenting themselves may be known to any one who uses his eyes to see and his mind to think with. For years we have looked upon the house of Frederick Stearns & Co. as one of the few really reputable and desire-to-be-decent pharmaceutical houses. And yet what is this house doing? Going straight into the "patent medicine" business direct and shamelessly. In innumerable places one may see "SHAC"—or Stearns Head Ache Cure—advertised to the laity. In street cars, displays in windows, etc., etc. This so-called headache "cure" is nothing more nor less than an acetanilide mixture and, according to the *Journal A. M. A.*, at least two cases of poisoning are chargeable to it. The same house is also going to the public with "Pam" for the dyspeptic and "Zymole Trokeys" for husky throats. What will it put out next? Is this the right sort of thing for a manufacturer, appealing to the medical profession for support, to do? It does not seem to be quite right, does it? There are some signs of an approaching condition of things in the medical profession when its members will say to the manufacturer, deal with us or the public, but not with both. Why not help that condition of things to approach? Why not assume that attitude toward Stearns? Is the house of Frederick Stearns & Co. in business to supply medicines for physicians or to treat the sick directly and illegally?

* The Present Pandemic of Plague. By Asst. Surg.-Gen. J. M. Eager.